



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney
District of Maryland
Northern Division

Rod J. Rosenstein
United States Attorney

Vickie E. LeDuc
Public Information Officer

36 South Charles Street
Fourth Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

410-209-4800
TTY/TDD: 410-962-4462
410-209-4885
FAX 410-962-3091
Vickie.LeDuc@usdoj.gov

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**FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION CONTACT
VICKIE E. LEDUC
(410) 209-4885**

ORGANIZED CRIME DRUG ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE:
MEMBERS OF LARGE DRUG ORGANIZATION SENTENCED FOR
DRUG, GUN AND MONEY LAUNDERING CHARGES

***Defendants Used Sophisticated Hidden Compartments in Vehicles to Import
Hundreds of Kilograms of Cocaine from New York***

Greenbelt, Maryland - United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod Rosenstein announces that today United States District Court Judge Alexander Williams, Jr. sentenced the following defendants in connection with their conviction by a federal jury on June 23, 2005 to the following charges:

Deone Antonio Melvin, age 26, of Lanham, Maryland, 540 months in prison followed by five years of supervised release for conspiracy to distribute powder and crack cocaine, distribution of cocaine, conspiracy to engage in money laundering, money laundering, possession of guns in furtherance of drug trafficking and possession of guns after being convicted of a felony;

Ramone Stephon Jones, age 27, of Upper Marlboro, Maryland, 360 months in prison followed by ten years of supervised release for conspiracy to distribute powder and crack cocaine, conspiracy to engage in money laundering, money laundering, possession of guns in furtherance of drug trafficking and possession of guns after being convicted of a felony;

Stephon Mason, age 31, of Fort Washington, Maryland, life imprisonment plus five years, followed by ten years of supervised release for conspiracy to distribute powder and crack cocaine, possession with intent to distribute cocaine, conspiracy to engage in money laundering, money laundering, possession of guns in furtherance of drug trafficking and possession of guns after being convicted of a felony; and

Adrian Alexander, age 28, of Suitland, Maryland, 295 months in prison followed by five

years of supervised release for conspiracy to distribute powder and crack cocaine and possession of guns after being convicted of a felony.

The court also ordered that Melvin, Jones and Mason forfeit \$5 million to the government and that Alexander forfeit \$300,000 to the government. The court also ordered that the defendants forfeit to the government various vehicles which were used to facilitate drug trafficking or which were purchased using drug proceeds.

“Drug dependency and violence are fueled by criminals who import illegal drugs into Maryland,” said United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein. “The lengthy sentences imposed in this case will put these drug dealers out of business and send a powerful message to other people.”

According to evidence presented at trial, including calls intercepted as a result of several wiretaps initiated by the investigators, from 1997 through 2003, the defendants used numerous vehicles equipped with sophisticated hidden compartments to transport hundreds of kilograms of cocaine from New York to the Maryland-D.C. area, which they then redistributed to customers locally. The defendants used a drug supplier in New York to obtain the cocaine, as well as vehicles equipped with hidden compartments. The sophisticated hidden compartments, which were installed in the vehicles in New York, were operated through complicated hydraulic systems which were designed to allow the defendants to evade detection by law enforcement. During the investigation, law enforcement officers seized several of the vehicles and were able to dismantle the hidden compartments, many of which contained drugs and guns when they were seized.

Trial evidence also included numerous guns seized from the defendants’ homes. Specifically, agents seized, among others, a Norinco 7.62 x 39 caliber rifle, Model SKS; a Glock .45 caliber pistol; a Sturm Ruger 9 mm pistol, Model P-85; a Heckler & Koch .40 caliber pistol, Model USP40; an Intratec 9 mm pistol, Model AB-10; a Masterpiece Arms .45 caliber pistol, Model MAC-10; a Heckler & Koch .45 caliber pistol, Model USP45; a RG .38 caliber revolver, Model RG40, with an obliterated serial number; and a Heckler and Koch .40 caliber USP handgun. Other guns were also seized from vehicles used by the defendants and other coconspirators.

According to the evidence presented at trial, the defendants also laundered their drug proceeds by purchasing expensive cars and by titling various vehicles in the names of others. The evidence showed that the defendants titled vehicles in other individuals’ names in order to conceal the fact that the vehicles were being used to facilitate their drug trafficking.

Over the last two years, several other defendants have pleaded guilty to drug, money laundering and/or gun charges, including:

Francisco Despiau of New York, New York, to conspiracy to distribute cocaine;
Marvin Hall of Bowie, Maryland, to conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine and PCP;
Ellis Matthews of Glen Burnie, Maryland, to conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine and PCP;
Harold McDade of Upper Marlboro, Maryland, to conspiracy to distribute cocaine and PCP;

Audrey Melvin of Lanham, Maryland, to conspiracy to engage in money laundering;
Antonio Mines of Upper Marlboro, Maryland, to conspiracy to distribute cocaine;
George Norris of Riverdale, Maryland, to conspiracy to distribute cocaine;
Shadita Sweeney of Washington, D.C., to conspiracy to distribute PCP;
Lyle Kent Wade of Washington, D.C., to conspiracy to distribute cocaine and PCP;
Bennie Wilder of Capitol Heights, Maryland; to conspiracy to distribute cocaine; and
Dadrian Williams of Largo, Maryland, to conspiracy to distribute cocaine.

Charges remain pending against Jermaine Wilson, who is awaiting trial.

United States Attorney Rosenstein commended the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the Prince George's County Police Department for their work on the lengthy investigation, which began in 2001.

Mr. Rosenstein thanked Assistant United States Attorneys Mythili Raman and Jason M. Weinstein, who prosecuted the case.